

C.I.A.'s Congressional Immunity

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Congressional supervision of the Central Intelligence Agency is seriously deficient. The 150 resolutions introduced in Congress on this subject over the past two decades reflect a persistent concern. Yet successive Administrations and the C.I.A. itself have blocked approval of all of these resolutions. The latest effort to establish more effective controls over this clandestine infra-government is encountering the same resistance.

Senator Russell and his "Secret Seven"—a Senate subcommittee selected, with C.I.A. screening, from the Armed Services and Appropriations Committees—have just rejected Senator Fulbright's proposal that their group be broadened and revitalized by including three members of the Foreign Relations Committee. This mild but useful proposal was designed to permit closer scrutiny of C.I.A. activities affecting foreign policy without going to the extent of establishing a powerful new monitoring body comparable to the Joint Committee for Atomic Energy.

Tighter control of the C.I.A. by the Administration, the first essential, has been imposed since the Bay of Pigs fiasco. But such control is no substitute for legislative supervision as part of the system of checks and balances of our constitutional government. The latest proof of inadequate control concerns the propriety of the Administration letting C.I.A. analysts present official arguments to American readers in the guise of independent scholarship.

The article on the Vietcong in the current issue of Foreign Affairs by George A. Carver—whose identity as a full-time C.I.A. employe was not disclosed—raises many questions. It is little justification to argue, as the C.I.A. evidently does, that the article was written by Mr. Carver in a private capacity and that the agency merely cleared it for "security." So fine a line of responsibility cannot be drawn in the case of an undercover agency.

The C.I.A., along with the United States Information Agency, is restricted by its charter to overseas activity. It has no business to seek to influence or color domestic opinion. It is one thing for an authorized spokesman of the Government openly to present the evidence for the Administration's contention that the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam is nothing more than an instrument of North Vietnam's Communist party. It is quite another thing for a C.I.A. official to do so, particularly when his identity is not revealed.

Senator Fulbright is on sound ground in asking Admiral Raborn to explain the Carver incident. Beyond this, it is equally necessary to adopt Senator McCarthy's resolution calling for a "full and complete" study of the C.I.A. and its effect on foreign policy by a special subcommittee of the Foreign Relations Committee. Much more Congressional review is needed than the occasional private hearings of the Russell subcommittee.